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ABSTRACT

A survey of 612 principals in six states demonstrated that student newspapers are a vital force in high school life. On the basis of this survey, from which tabular statistics are presented in this document, the following conclusions are justified: (1) High school students should study mass media as well as literature; (2) Students and teachers should read the high school newspaper regularly; (3) School newspapers are a significant factor in internal public relations and an important force in external public relations; (4) Principals do not give student journalism the support needed to achieve excellence. (CK)

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THE HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER AS A MEDIUM OF GOOD WILL

A Quill and Scroll Study
By Laurence R. Campbell, Director

Student newspapers are a vital force in high school life, according to a survey of 612 principals in Maine, Ohio, Virginia, Missouri, Texas, and California in 1968.

These conclusions are justified on the basis of this study:

1. High school students should study mass media as well as literature.

2. Students and teachers should read the high school newspaper regularly.

3. School newspapers are a significant factor in internal public relations.

4. School newspapers are an important force in external public relations.

5. Principals do not give student journalism the support needed to achieve excellence.

More than 9 out of 10 principals believe that "if students as they become citizens are to make decisions based on what they learn in mass media, they should study mass media as they study literature in high school." Of 612 principals, 544 or 91.2 per cent answered this question, "yes"; 17, "no"; 31 "don't know"; and 20 gave nc answer.

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"Courses in journalism encourage students to use mass media with care and discrimination," according to 483 or 88.8 per cent of the principals. Only 33 answered "no"; but 35 didn't know and 61 didn't answer.

Students are encouraged to read the school newspaper by 496 or 84.3 per cent of the principals. Oddly enough, 40 principals checked "don't know" instead of "yes" or "no" as an answer.

Teachers also are encouraged to read the newspaper. Of the 612 participating principals, 479 or 82.1 per cent encouraged teachers to do so and 40 checked "don't know."

Only 17 of the 612 principals said they were not available to meet high school newspaper reporters before each issue's deadline, whereas 563 or 95 per cent said they were.

More than nine out of ten - 540 principals - reported that they "encourage teachers to cooperate with high school newspaper reporters who go to teachers as sources of news." Only 29 said they did not.

Principals read high school newspapers regularly as Table 1 indicates. Accordingly 95.5 per cent read front page news; 94.1 per cent, editorials and columns; 89.2 per cent, sport news; 81.6 per cent, features and entertainment; 54.4 per cent, advertising.

TABLE 1.--Frequency with which principals read high school newspaper content

	Regularly	Often	Seldom	Never	No Answer
Front page news	569	26	1	0	16
Sports news	529	55	10	1	22
Editorials, columns	559	33	3	0	20
Features, entertainment	484	95	16	1	16
Advertisements	190	122	114	43	143

Best news coverage in the academic program is given to physical education, music, journalism, speech and drama, and English, according to the principals. Agriculture, social studies, mathematics, and natural science have the poorest coverage in terms of internal public relations. The "no answer" may mean that a school has no such program or that the principal didn't evaluate the coverage.

Co-curricular news receives better coverage than curricular news, as a comparison of Table 2 and Table 3 indicates.

Sports news, speech and drama, band, assemblies, and social events receive top emphasis. Only the senior class is given much attention.

Principals assert that the school newspaper covers news of community relations less effectively than curricular and co-curricular news, as Table 4 indicates.

TABLE 2.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of curricular news in terms of internal relations

	Excellent	Substantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Agriculture	40	72	68	62	155	215
Art - fine	165	178	170	78	28	53
Art - industrial	53	96	189	111	74	89
Business	79	149	179	92	43	70
English	164	183	173	45	12	35
Foreign Language	80	129	203	100	48	52
Homemaking	90	162	190	78	28	64
Journalism	186	190	112	44	16	64
Mathematics	63	121	208	117	52	51
Music	197	209	117	34	11	44
Physical Education	206	140	138	64	22	42
Science - natural	71	159	212	89	31	50
Social Studies	66	174	210	86	30	51
Speech - Drama	179	189	115	45	25	59
Vocational Course	80	127	160	94	58	93
Academic Program in General	131	212	168	46	14	41

High school newspapers excel at coverage of the principal's office, announcements, guidance, and the library, according to Table 5.

Reporting of news of maintenance, the grounds, audiovisual services, food service, and health service is much less satisfactory, as this source indicates.

The high school newspaper is more effective as an instrument of good will in internal public relations than in external public relations.

Compare Tables 2 and 6, 3 and 7, 4 and 8, 5 and 9 for evidence gathered from 612 principals in six states in six regions of the United States.

In terms of external coverage news of physical education, music, speech and drama, journalism, and English leads. See Table 6.

Agriculture, social studies, science, mathematics, and foreign language receive the least satisfactory coverage. See Table 6.

TABLE 3.--Principals' rating of coverage of co-curricular news in terms of internal public relations

Co-Curricular Activity	Ex-cellent	Sub-stantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Assembly	206	199	138	23	6	40
Band	218	186	106	23	16	63
Chorus	186	180	129	43	18	56
Clubs	184	216	145	20	6	41
Dances	164	175	130	48	26	69
Debates	98	114	127	66	77	130
Drama - plays	222	187	112	21	24	46
Freshman class	55	88	177	106	59	127
Handbook	49	79	148	108	105	123
Junior Class	80	169	204	50	23	86
Magazines	57	63	134	85	111	162
Newspaper	152	152	140	53	30	85
Orchestra	93	101	108	48	73	189
Senior Class	178	213	94	28	22	17
Service Clubs	117	168	148	59	56	84
Social Events	204	197	125	23	6	57
Sophomore Class	61	124	201	103	29	94
Sports - inter-school	328	149	54	18	11	52
Sports - intra-mural	154	125	130	68	45	90
Student Council	207	206	110	28	8	53
Co-curricular Program in General	153	221	150	29	5	54

TABLE 4.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of news of community relations in terms of internal relations

	Ex-cellent	Sub-stantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Adult Education	39	55	97	94	177	150
Alumni	47	75	138	112	147	93
Board of Education	57	81	144	97	128	105
Education Week	79	128	142	90	82	91
Open House	150	149	127	55	49	82
Parents' Organization	83	112	138	71	104	104

TABLE 5.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of news of administration in terms of internal relations

	Ex-cellent	Sub-stantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Audiovisual Services	53	92	141	115	119	92
Announcements	142	165	149	57	35	64
Buildings	83	116	155	96	75	87
Food Service	56	86	179	101	103	87
Grounds	52	81	168	112	113	86
Guidance	121	173	151	68	37	62
Health Service	52	93	167	103	100	97
Library	104	179	168	66	35	60
Maintenance	39	65	137	136	144	91
Personnel	109	155	148	68	58	74
Principal's Office	145	158	139	75	35	60
Testing Service	98	155	162	67	55	75
Vice-Principal	83	127	117	63	85	137
Other News	88	148	164	65	34	117

News of sports, band, plays, and student council leads in coverage in terms of external public relations. See Table 7. Freshmen, sophomore, and junior class organizations are of limited interest.

In terms of external public relations high school newspaper coverage of community relations is unimpressive, as Table 8 indicates.

The high school newspaper covers administration news fairly well so far as external public relations are concerned, as Table 9 indicates.

Of the 612 principals, 567 or 95.5 per cent encourage "excellence in band, orchestra, and chorus"; 503 or 86.7 per cent encourage "athletic teams to strive for championships"; but only 453 or 77.1 per cent encourage "newspaper staffs to strive for championships - that is, high ratings in critical services."

While many principals recognize the vital role the high school newspaper can play in both internal and external public relations, their efforts to raise journalistic standards are somewhat uneven. Consider the data in Table 10.

TABLE 6.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of curricular news in terms of external relations

	Ex-cellent	Sub-stantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Agriculture	39	50	79	74	165	205
Art - fine	72	145	156	100	54	85
Art - industrial	44	73	166	120	95	114
Business	63	109	175	104	62	99
English	100	129	188	76	36	83
Foreign Language	59	99	174	108	82	90
Homemaking	71	120	174	100	48	99
Journalism	137	134	134	68	44	95
Mathematics	59	93	172	125	78	85
Music	150	168	128	57	25	84
Physical Education	150	116	141	80	44	81
Science	60	111	189	112	54	86
Social Studies	58	120	190	97	58	89
Speech - drama	123	151	132	73	41	92
Vocational Courses	59	106	153	101	74	119
Other Courses	36	84	173	95	65	159
Academic Program in General	101	155	165	79	37	75

To be sure, it may be noted that more than one half of the 612 principals answered the questions "yes." But why shouldn't they have answered all of them "yes."

If the principal expects results in music, English, or sports, he employs majors in those fields. If he expects results in journalism, chances are that about one out of three advisors will have the minimum qualifications in journalism. Such a policy is not consistent with the best interests of the school.

While it is remarkable that so many principals rate the high school newspaper favorably as a medium of good will, it is unfortunate that the majority of them still regard the newspaper adviser's position as a past any English teacher can fill.

TABLE 7.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of co-curricular news in terms of external relations

	Excellent	Substantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Assemblies	121	154	164	65	25	83
Band	169	141	126	43	29	104
Chorus	138	155	130	56	36	97
Clubs	116	149	169	62	32	84
Dances	98	128	158	66	57	105
Debates	75	86	122	78	91	160
Drama - plays	170	147	111	51	41	92
Freshman Class	40	71	145	120	79	157
Handbook	39	75	124	104	117	153
Junior Class	66	120	185	68	49	124
Magazines	44	59	133	82	118	176
Newspaper	105	140	129	66	50	122
Orchestra	71	85	116	64	77	199
Senior Class	128	151	125	43	48	117
Service Clubs	85	129	155	63	58	122
Social Events	141	130	154	59	30	98
Sophomore Class	47	97	179	104	58	127
Sports - inter-school	235	127	83	42	33	92
Sports - intra-mural	114	94	120	83	75	126
Student Council	141	149	145	54	33	90
Co-curricular Program in General	105	162	154	65	31	95

TABLE 8.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of community relations news in terms of external relations

	Excellent	Substantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Adult Education	39	57	99	78	171	168
Alumni	48	67	128	97	145	127
Board of Education	61	84	115	92	127	133
Education Week	79	113	113	91	88	128
Open House	129	136	106	64	62	115
Parents' Organization	83	105	117	72	105	130

TABLE 9.--Principals' rating of quality of coverage of administration news in terms of external relations

	Excellent	Substantial	Good	Fair	Poor	No Answer
Audiovisual Service	43	66	145	91	140	127
Announcements	109	97	161	78	62	105
Buildings	69	82	158	86	97	120
Food Service	42	66	163	101	115	125
Grounds	34	67	158	101	127	125
Guidance	90	119	177	63	60	103
Health Service	37	75	164	89	118	129
Library	81	128	162	69	66	106
Maintenance	31	63	142	105	148	123
Personnel	87	116	154	73	71	111
Principal's Office	115	116	147	69	64	101
Testing Service	77	116	164	75	67	113
Vice-Principal	71	88	120	56	104	173
Other News	64	111	177	65	52	143

TABLE 10.--Support of newspaper program

	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Answer
Librarian is encouraged to budget some money for journalistic books and resource materials each year	368	157	52	35
Adviser is encouraged to submit list of equipment and facilities needed for a good journalism laboratory	405	146	28	33
Money is budgeted for the journalism laboratory just as it is for industrial arts, homemaking, business education, and science courses	302	69	11	30
The journalism laboratory has five good standard typewriters	192	376	17	27

TABLE 11.--Personnel situation and high school newspaper

	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Answer
The school employs athletic team coaches with majors or minors in physical education	490	75	11	36
The school employs a newspaper adviser with a major or minor in journalism	336	250	11	15
The music teachers are expected to have a bachelor's degree in music	567	23	4	18
The newspaper adviser is expected to have a bachelor's degree in journalism	172	399	21	20
The head of the Department of English has 18 or more semester hours in English	580	3	11	18
The newspaper adviser has 18 or more semester hours in English	228	312	50	22

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